



FALL 2009 NEWSLETTER



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NEW YORK STATE SENATOR DAVID J. VALESKY • VALESKY.NYSENATE.GOV • EMAIL: VALESKY@SENATE.STATE.NY.US • PHONE: 315-478-8745

Dear Neighbor,

As everyone knows, it has been a difficult year in the State Senate as we had to grapple with a national economic crisis, a \$17 billion state deficit and an inexcusable stalemate as session drew to an end. There were also, however, several positive accomplishments this year, that I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you. In particular, we adopted several economic development proposals this past session that will directly benefit Upstate New York.

As the Senate worked to weather the economic crisis, my main priority was and will continue to be protecting and creating jobs in Upstate New York. To do that, I sponsored job creating initiatives to revitalize Main Streets in villages and towns, to encourage economic development in cities across Upstate and to help businesses cut through red tape and navigate state agencies.

Now, the economic indicators are showing that the worst of the recession is behind us and that there is reason for hope. Still, we know that the road to economic recovery and prosperity will be a long one. In fact, the Governor is indicating that the state is facing a \$2.1 billion mid-year deficit. As we deal with this, it will be imperative to look at ways to right-size government spending. We have an opportunity—and an obligation—to rein in spending that has been rampant for decades.

**“We have an opportunity—and an obligation—to rein in spending that has been rampant for decades.”**

As your State Senator, I will continue to work diligently on issues of importance to the people of Central New York.

I also want to thank the thousands of constituents that took the time to write, call and e-mail me about a variety of issues. Your input is extremely valuable, and it enables me to best represent the 49th Senate District.

As always, please feel free to contact me by calling my district office in Syracuse at **315-478-8745**, my Albany office at **518-455-2838**, or by email at **valesky@senate.state.ny.us**. My staff and I look forward to hearing from you.



Senator Valesky read to students at Andrews Elementary School in Morrisville as part of their “Reading Stars” program.

Sincerely,

**David J. Valesky**  
NYS Senator  
49th Senate District



Senator Valesky toured the Syracuse South Side Innovation Center’s Community Test Kitchen, where aspiring food entrepreneurs can perfect their recipes for production.

Senator Valesky also sponsored legislation that strengthened the Main Street Program, which provides grants to improve downtown areas. This program will help jump-start new projects to bring people and businesses back to our city and village centers, and help them to become the economic engines they once were.

Another Senator Valesky-sponsored initiative creates regional “one-stop” economic development centers where business owners can learn about state programs that benefit their businesses and receive help in navigating sometimes complicated federal, state and local regulations, including licensing and permitting.

Senator Valesky is optimistic that, with these programs, there will be an end the decades-long stagnation in Upstate New York, and once again businesses will grow here, young people will stay here, and Main Streets will thrive here.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Senator Valesky’s strategy for real economic development and revitalization in Upstate New York is threefold: rebuilding cities and villages to make them economic engines again; retooling manufacturing facilities and re-training the workforce for the jobs of the new economy; and supporting businesses and industries that will thrive in Upstate New York.

This year, Senator Valesky sponsored several new laws that have the potential to drastically change the economic conditions in cities and villages in our region, finally reversing the population loss and encouraging growth that will relieve the strain on property taxpayers.

“The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit will provide tax credits for rehabilitation and redevelopment of qualified residential and commercial properties, bringing developers back to Upstate.”

The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit will provide tax credits for rehabilitation and redevelopment of qualified residential and commercial properties, bringing developers back to Upstate. Passage of this legislation was a big “win” for Central New York. There are already developers ready to begin work on projects in the area as a result of the tax credit. This program has great potential to revitalize the Upstate economy and reduce the strain on urban, suburban and rural communities alike.

## STEP ONE IN REDUCING PROPERTY TAX BURDEN

Over the last 75 years, New York State has seen exponential growth in its local governments and special taxing units, which include water, sewer and lighting districts, towns and villages. In 1940, there were just 2,000 of these entities. Today, there are 10,521.

This growth has brought with it increased costs to taxpayers and is partially responsible for the heavy property tax burden New Yorkers face. The economic crisis has underscored the need for relief through creative solutions. One of those solutions is to consolidate some of these local governmental entities.

With the leadership of Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, a new law now empowers voters to request consolidation be placed on a ballot for consideration. Ten percent of voters (or 5,000 people, whichever is less) within each village, town, or sewer district, for example, can request that consolidation be placed on the ballot for all voters to consider.

In short, the new process would put control of the decision-making process where it belongs—in the hands of community residents—while providing adequate checks and balances to protect against one small group wielding too much power.

This bill represents real reform by giving you, the taxpayers, a larger role in the plan to reduce the tax burden.





# LEGISLATION PASSED

**The Legislature passed 32 bills sponsored by Senator Valesky this session, the most of any legislator in New York.**

Senator Valesky was the main sponsor of 32 bills that passed both houses of the Legislature, the most of any legislator in either house. Many of these bills focus on economic development and job creation in New York State. Some highlights:

**Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit:** provides a tax credit for rehabilitation of residential and commercial properties in distressed census tracts.

**Main Street Program:** grant program for infrastructure improvements to main streets in cities and villages.

**One-Stop Economic Development Centers:** creates regional centers for small businesses that provide information about resources available and help in navigating the sometimes complicated federal, state and local regulations.

**Boater Safety:** increases the penalties for leaving the scene of a boating accident, making them consistent

with penalties for leaving the scene of an automobile accident.

**Agency Accountability:** prohibits state agencies from making personal loans to employees.

**Craft Brewers:** permits small beer brewers to expand their markets by selling beer in a sealed container at fairs and farmers' markets.

**Intervenor Funds:** requires companies proposing electric transmission projects make funds available to help municipalities, citizens and community groups have a voice in those projects.

**Green Energy:** includes residential micro combined heat and power systems in technologies that can be connected to the grid

For a comprehensive list of legislation Senator Valesky sponsors, please visit his website at [www.valesky.nysenate.gov](http://www.valesky.nysenate.gov).

## GOOD GOVERNMENT

Senator Valesky believes that good government is efficient, effective and accountable, and continues to be a strong advocate for government reform in Albany. He has worked to achieve significant steps in opening the process and empowering New Yorkers to be informed and involved.

Through work by the Senate Temporary Committee on Rules and Administration Reform, which Senator Valesky co-chairs, many of the Senate's rules were changed to empower individual Senators and committees, and to distribute resources more equitably. This represents a major step forward from the past forty years, where leadership held a tight grip on legislation and resource allocation.

This legislative session, Senator Valesky also sponsored a series of bills focused on good government and providing transparency and increased access to citizens, including one that expands the options for the general public to take part in public meetings by allowing people in attendance to record, broadcast, webcast and photograph meetings.

Transparency and access to information is a key component of reforming Albany. This year, the Senate also took giant steps by unveiling a new web site that makes finding legislation easier, and offers avenues to comment on proposed legislation. Senator Valesky will be working with his colleagues in the Senate and Assembly to create a legislative channel which will broadcast session, committee hearings and other governmental information to television viewers across the state, further opening up the process.

## GREEN JOBS, GREEN NEW YORK



**Senator Valesky joined community members to unveil a Syracuse "green" home with the latest in energy efficient, carbon neutral technology.**

A bill Senator Valesky co-sponsored, the Green Jobs/Green New York program, will get to the heart of two of Central New York's biggest issues—the availability of permanent, skilled jobs and high energy costs.

Green Jobs/Green New York aims to weatherize one million homes, businesses and not-for-profits in the next five years by establishing a revolving loan program to provide up to \$13,000 for residential homes and \$26,000 for businesses to retrofit for increased energy efficiency.

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Because of increased demand for services, local contractors will be able to expand their crews, creating new and permanent jobs in green construction and additional jobs in local businesses and manufacturing that serve those new workers—a perfect fit for Central New York’s needs.

In addition to creating jobs and reducing energy costs for consumers, the Green Jobs/Green New York program will have a positive impact on our environment by reducing our state’s carbon footprint.

The program is being funded from the sale of carbon credits through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and will not require any additional taxpayer dollars—exactly the kind of creative thinking needed to weather the economic crisis New York State has been facing.

## PROTECTING OUR SENIORS

In this year’s budget, Senator Valesky fought to preserve the EPIC wraparound program, which helps seniors save an average of 90 percent on the cost of prescription medicine. The program was also expanded to allow coverage for mail order drugs, making it easier for seniors to get their medications at home. In addition, \$2 million was allocated for the SNAP program, which provides in-home nutritious meals to homebound senior citizens through programs like Meals on Wheels.

## STOPPING NYRI –MAKING COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

Senator Valesky introduced legislation that was signed into law that evens the playing field by giving communities the financial resources to have a loud voice in proposed power line projects like New York Regional Interconnect (NYRI).

The law requires power companies to create a fund earmarked for affected municipalities. Depending on the size and scope of the proposed project, the fund can contain up to \$450,000. That way, the real stakeholders—municipalities and the people who live there—have a solid and predictable financial pool from which to draw.

Concerned residents can spend less time raising money and more time organizing, educating and advocating. And that’s the way it should be.

This law provides more than a bank account. It provides protection for our communities from insidious projects like NYRI that have the potential to decimate our communities, decrease our property values, dissect our protected land, and increase Upstate utility rates.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

As a service to constituents, a number of **free** informational brochures are available, and can be obtained by calling Senator Valesky’s district office at **315-478-8745** or via e-mail at **valesky@senate.state.ny.us**.

- **Albany...It’s a Capital Experience**
- **Keeping your Kids Safe**
- **Easy Access to Your Government**
- **Senior Citizen Guide to Health Care Services**
- **EPIC**
- **Helping Veterans in New York**
- **Protecting Yourself from Identity Theft**
- **How a Bill Becomes a Law**
- **New York State’s College Savings Program**
- **Laws for Volunteer Emergency Personnel**
- **Consumer Guide to Credit Reports**
- **Finding Health Care Coverage**
- **Tour New York**

## DID YOU KNOW?



This year, the **NY Prescription Saver Card** program was launched for people aged 50-64, which offers savings of about 30-40% off the price of generics, and at least 25% off the full retail price of prescriptions to New York State residents between 50 and 64 years old. To get the free card, call **1-800-788-6917** or visit **nyprescriptionsaver.fhsc.com**.



Senator Valesky greeted Joey, a two-ton Belgian horse, at the Morrisville State College Barn at the New York State Fair.



Members of the Victory Fire Department met with Senator Valesky to discuss their plans for a legislative grant obtained by the Senator.



Senator Valesky introduced the 10th Mountain Division Army Band at the Sylvan Beach Canalfest. The band, which performs across the Northeast, just returned from deployment in Afghanistan.



### Senator David J. Valesky

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